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SOURCE Newspapers as indicated.

RETURN OF AUSTRIAN PRISONERS FROM USSR

27 AUSTRIAN PRISONERS RETURNED BY SOVIETS -- Vienna, Die Presse, 30 Dec 52

After an interval of 2 years, a train from the Soviet Union again arrived in Vienna on 29 December 1952 with 27 Austrian prisoners of war. Interior Minister Helmer, Mayor Jonas, and Police Vice-President Huettl greeted the men who had been imprisoned for more than 7 years.

Many of the men had been arrested long after the war; some of them had been taken away from their families. The famine years of 1945, 1946, and 1947 followed, with hard labor on kolkhozes, in forestry, mining and reconstruction, and insufficient food. One man dared to escape and wandered around in the USSR for 6 months but was finally caught. He was court-martialled and sentenced to death, but after he had spent 6 weeks in the death cell, his sentence was commuted to 25 years' imprisonment.

The others also were sentenced to long imprisonment, mostly with a maximum of 25 years, simply because they had stolen potatoes to keep from starving while working in the fields, or because they had belonged to certain units of the Wehrmacht or SS, or even just because their presence in the Wehrmacht had prolonged the war. Hundreds were tried, without any defense counsels, often without any interpreters or possibility of exoneration.

In 1947-48 the prison camps were emptied; only the "war criminals" remained. Hard labor continued, but conditions gradually improved. There was sufficient food and wages improved. They were able to get cigarettes and other things which made life more bearable.

Twenty-six of those who returned yesterday came from Sverdlovsk, Camp 61/18; one came from Stalingrad, Camp 61/24. According to their reports, there are 700 to 800 more Austrians in the camps near Sverdlovsk and 30 in Stalingrad. Several reported that there is also a large camp of civilian internees near Sverdlovsk. They also brought news that Jakob Prohaska from Linz (born in 1897) had died in Camp 61/18p near Sverdlovsk about 2 months ago.

NWC task force reviewed; document not relevant Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act.

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NAMES OF THE RELEASED PRISONERS -- Vienna, Das Kleine Volksblatt, 30 Dec 52

The following are the names, dates of birth, and residences of the 27 Austrians released by the Soviets on 29 December 1952:

Dr Johann Bartak, 30 September 1913, Vienna XV
Karl Bergschöber, 24 June 1923, Radstadt, Salzburg Province
Rudolf Blauensteiner, 29 August 1904, Vienna V
Johann Boehm, 20 October 1896, Vienna X
Waldemar Brandstaetter, 15 December 1922, Werfen, Salzburg Province
Ferdinand Einspinner, 9 August 1895, Vienna-Liesing
Heinrich Ernst, 12 July 1903, Mailberg, Niederoesterreich Province
Oswald Grundnig, 18 June 1919, Krems, Niederoesterreich Province
Josef Kiszelitza, [date not given], Vienna XXIII
Anton Koblenz, 10 August 1913, Vienna X
Wenzel Kocian, 1 July 1905, Vienna XXIII
Wilhelm Meyerhofer, 17 April 1918, Vienna XVII
Rudolf Memer, 7 March 1920, Kapfenberg, Steiermark Province
Johann Moesl, 12 October 1923, Salzburg
Alois Oberlechner, 28 December 1921, Innsbruck
Zeno Pernce, 19 October 1919, Ferlach, Kaernten Province
Hans Peterschinig, 16 November 1908, Schwanberg, Steiermark Province
Karl Steigberger, Litschau, [date not given], Niederoesterreich Province
Adolf Stelzer, 2 June 1918, Graz
Fritz Stern, 11 May 1923, Judenburg, Steiermark Province
Leopold Schabel, 10 November 1923, Vienna XX
Josef Weber, 20 October 1925, Marchring, Steiermark Province
Johann Wenky, 1 February 1906, Innsbruck
Egon Bergen, [date not given], Vienna XVI
Erwin Kowetter, [date not given], Waidhofen an der Thaya
Hans Heiler, [date not given], Freistadt, Oberoesterreich Province
Josef Saluschny, 3 May 1890, Salzburg

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